Accessible Audio Transcript for "Electronic Curb Cut" Video

[Visual of a curb cut with the following text: "The Electronic Curb Cut"]

[Visual of a woman pulling her luggage on wheels and using the handicap entrance to enter a building]

[Narrator speaking] Next time you enter your workplace, stop and think about how convenient it was to enter the building.

[Visual of a man walking up the steep steps in front of the Minnesota State Capitol]

You could choose to use the stairs, a ramp or an incline to get to the entrance.

[Visual of a man pressing the automatic door opener in front of a building]

You probably had more options when it came to opening the main doors, such as using a door handle or pressing the automatic door opener.

Just 25 years ago, however, options were more limited.

[Visual of a man in a wheelchair talking with the receptionist at the Reference Library at the Minnesota State Office building]

In fact, many people with disabilities had to make special arrangements before they could enter or use public buildings or they were forced to use a service entrance.

[Visual of a woman in a wheelchair traveling on a sidewalk]

Public awareness of the importance of making buildings more accessible was raised when the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, was passed in 1990.

[Visual of a woman using a ramp in front of a building]

Soon entrance ramps became commonplace.

[Visual of a Handicap Parking sign in front of the Minnesota State Capitol]

The wheelchair icon that signals accessible facilities became a mainstay in public buildings.

[Visual of a woman in a wheelchair traveling across a curb cut in a sidewalk}

Curb cuts were designed into sidewalks to make it easier for people with disabilities to move from place to place.

Then, an interesting thing happened.

The legal mandate to provide equal access quickly led to an increased demand for better, more user-friendly architecture.

[Visual of a woman carrying a box and using the handicap entrance to enter a building]

People soon discovered that accessible facilities benefitted everyone, not just people with disabilities.

[Visual of a woman rolling her luggage across a curb cut in a sidewalk]

The curb cut is a perfect example.

As curb cuts became more common, people realized that curb cuts made life easier for everyone.

[Visuals of a woman using a wheelchair, a woman pushing a baby stroller and a man pushing a dolly on a street]

Not only people using wheelchairs and walkers, but mothers and fathers using strollers, people riding skateboards and bicycles, people using dollies to deliver goods.

[Visuals of a man in a wheelchair traveling down a sidewalk and entering a building]

A sidewalk with a curb cut is, quite simply, a better sidewalk!

Likewise, accessible buildings are, quite simply, better buildings!

[Visual of a television monitor with closed captions]

And, information and technology that can be accessed and used easily by everyone are, quite simply, better information and better technology.

[A series of visuals of different people using a computer]

In this video, you'll learn about the important role you play in making sure that the hardware, software, web sites and electronic documents that you purchase or develop are fully accessible.

Many people assume that information and technology are already accessible.

However, the reality is that not all technology is created equal.

It's also true that not all information is formatted in ways that make it easy for everyone to use.

You play an important part in ensuring equal access

[Visual of a row of different types of accessible technology]

You are in a position to make sure that all computers, telephone systems and other hardware you recommend or purchase are fully accessible.

[Visual of a State of MN website that is captioned]

The same is true for the software applications that support them.

[Visual of a person who is DeafBlind using a zoom feature on a computer monitor]

You also can make sure that all electronic documents, videos, web sites and other communications that you create are accessible to everyone, including people with a wide range of abilities and physical limitations.

You'll learn more about accessibility standards and your role in a few minutes.

But, first, it's important to understand the difference between accessible technology, assistive technology and accommodations.

An accommodation is a physical solution put in place to help an individual communicate better, learn or work more effectively, live independently or participate more fully in community activities.

[Visual of a man using a screen reader]

Assistive technology, like screen reading technology called a screen reader, is a special kind of accommodation.

Assistive technology is exactly what the name implies -- a piece of equipment or technology that helps a person with a disability perform a task.

Some examples of accommodations and assistive technology include a Braille display, a desk that is higher or lower so that it functions better for a person who uses a wheelchair, or a video phone.

[Visual of a Personal Care Assistant helping a man in a wheelchair]

An accommodation can even be another person who provides a specific kind of support to a person with a disability.

[Visual of a group of people meeting in a conference room that includes an ASL interpreter]

For example, an ASL interpreter would facilitate communication for a deaf participant during a meeting, a job coach could support a person with an intellectual disability as he or she learns to do a job or a paraprofessional might be assigned to assist a child with disabilities in a classroom.

[Visual of a computer monitor displaying a website]

Accessibility, on the other hand, is designed directly into the piece of equipment, software, web site or electronic document from the very beginning to make it easier for everyone to use.

[Visual of a handicap elevator in a hearing room at the Minnesota State Office Building]

Accessibility applies to places, like elevators, curb cuts and office spaces.

[Visual of various types of kitchen tools]

It can apply to things, like ergonomically designed kitchen tools that are more comfortable for everyone to use, not just people with arthritis or limited dexterity.

[Visual of a person using a website in order to register to vote]

Or, access can apply to information technology, like hardware, software applications and web sites.

It also applies to the way information is formatted for electronic use.

[Visual of a bolt of lightning striking a curb cut on a sidewalk and the curb cut starts glowing]

Think of accessible technology and information as an electronic curb cut!

Examples of accessibility include captioning all videos, providing text and images in alternative formats, buying software that allows the user to control how he or she prefers to use it, or designing web sites that are intuitive and easy to navigate.

So, who benefits when information and technology is accessible?

It’s easy to think of accessibility as a disability issue.

But everyone wins when information and technology are accessible and easy to use.

[Series of visuals of many people working in an office setting]

Look around you.

You might be surprised to discover who uses accessibility features – and why!

[Young man signing in front of a computer and voiced by an interpreter] I use the captions feature because I'm deaf. The captions let me gather the information I need to do my job.

[Woman speaking in front of a computer] I can hear but I use the captions feature on this training video so I don't disturb my coworkers.

[Woman speaking in front of a computer] I can use my hands but I prefer not using a mouse. I use a keypad instead.

[Woman speaking in front of a computer] I use the audio whenever I can because I have dyslexia and it takes me longer to read information. I understand information better when it's read to me.

[Older man speaking in front of a computer] I have arthritis. Sometimes it's difficult for me to use a mouse. I like having the option to use a keypad or a mouse to navigate information on the screen.

[Man speaking in front of a Braille display on his desk] I work with data all the time and I'm blind. So it's important that charts and graphs and other information be formatted in a way that makes sense to my screen reader software.

[Man speaking in front of a computer] I'm not colorblind but I work with data all the time. When I print out documents that include charts and graphs, I like to use black and white. I don't depend on the use of color. That way, I can use a black and white printer and it's a lot cheaper!

[Man in a wheelchair speaking in front of a computer in his office] I don't have use of my hands but if the hardware/software is accessible, I can use my computer without any assistance.

[A series of visuals of people with different types of disabilities using a computer]

[Narrator continues speaking] Each of these people uses the same technology in different ways.

They may not realize it, but they're taking advantage of an electronic curb cut!

They're all benefitting from built-in accessibility features that allow them to customize how they use a piece of hardware or software, a web site or electronic document.

Each example illustrates how decisions made by the person who purchased or created the equipment or information made it easier for everyone to use it.

These users have discovered that accessible information and technology is, quite simply, better information and better technology for everyone, not only people with disabilities.

Equal access to information and technology is obviously crucial for people with disabilities who may require alternative ways to use hardware, software, web sites and electronic information efficiently.

[Visual of a pie chart with a slice labeled "54.4 million"]

As of 2005, over 54 million people in the United States had a disability that limited some aspect of their lives.

[A series of visuals of different people using a computer]

Did you know that one out of every four computer users has some form of visual impairment?

That one out of every four computer users has a dexterity challenge?

Or that one out of five computer users is deaf or has a hearing loss?

The people represented by these statistics are your coworkers, customers and end users.

There are important economic benefits associated with accessible technology.

Study after study shows that it's cheaper and more efficient to deliver government services online.

But we can't reap the benefits if our citizens can't access or use information or services because they're not accessible.

Until all information and technology are fully accessible, we will need to continue providing access to government services through expensive brick and mortar facilities.

Accessible technology offers economic benefits as well by opening new employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Nearly 20% of the population has some type of disability in the United States.

[Visual of a pie chart with three slices: 22% with a disability; 70% without a disability; 8% unemployed]

Yet, fewer than 22% of adults with a disability have jobs, compared with 70% of adults who do not have a disability.

[Visual of an older woman in a wheelchair being raised into an accessible van]

It's also important to recognize that the number of people with disabilities in the U.S. is increasing.

The population is aging. It should come as no surprise that the number of people with disabilities increases with age.

More than half of U.S. citizens over 65 report having a disability that limits some aspect of their life.

[Visual of a bar chart with two bars: 54.4 million in 2011; 115 million in 2020]

By 2020, the senior population in the U.S. will near 115 million.

Another contributing factor is the unprecedented number of veterans returning from combat with permanent disabilities.

[Visual of man going through physical therapy with a Physical Therapist]

In 2010, nearly 25% of veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan returned with permanent disabilities, particularly traumatic brain injuries, hearing and/or vision loss and amputated limbs.

Accessible technology will be critical to their ability to return to full employment.

These are some of the people who will use the information you gather, the web sites you build, the documents you create and the technology you purchase.

It's your job to provide technology and information that are accessible to everyone.

Keep in mind that if information is available through the State of Minnesota, it must be accessible to everyone.

That's the law.

International, federal and state standards have been created to help you create and purchase information and technology that passes the accessibility test.

On the federal level, Section 508 is shaping the way technology is designed, purchased and used.

All over the world, web developers apply WCAG 2.0 standards to improve the accessibility of information delivered via the Web.

Section 508 sets basic standards that must be met for all electronic, information and telecommunications technology purchased by the federal government.

Here are a few examples of the types of products and technologies covered by Section 508: telephones, cell phones and other telecommunication products, computer hardware, computer software, web sites, media players, electronic documents and PDAs.

WCAG, or Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, play a similar role in the online world.

These guidelines were created by the World Wide Web Consortium, or WWW.

The goal of WCAG is to make sure that all web content is accessible by providing alternate ways to access information.

While these standards were developed to make the Web accessible for people with disabilities, these same options are useful for anyone accessing the Web.

The State of Minnesota has embraced both Section 508 and WCAG standards and incorporated them into a set of technology accessibility standards.

When fully implemented, these standards will ensure that all hardware, software, and online applications purchased and used by state workers are accessible.

The standards also ensure that all state developed applications, web sites and content are easy to access by everyone.

The Minnesota Technology and Information Accessibility Standards cover:

- Hardware, software and online applications purchased.
- Software applications, web sites, online forms and online surveys developed.
- Webinars, live videoconferencing, web streaming, and podcasts created or purchased.
- Videos and documents created by state employees.
- Contracts for hardware, software, videos, web sites, electronic communications and other information services developed or purchased on behalf of the state.

These standards help to ensure that:

- We make information technology truly useful to all Minnesota residents,
- We serve all customers as they expect to be served by providing information that is easy to access and use,
- We comply with federal accessibility standards and, as a result, are eligible to receive federal grants and funding,
- We limit potential exposure to expensive lawsuits, and
- We provide the accessible technology and information needed to hire and retain employees, including those with disabilities.

So, what's in it for you?

A lot! Accessible technology is all about you.

Accessible technology is also all about your coworkers and the constituents you represent and the consumers who depend on you.

It's up to you to purchase and develop the hardware, software, web sites and electronic information that allows everyone access to the information they need when, where and how they choose.

Accessibility is everyone's job.

You can help by following the State's technology accessibility standards, making sure that you incorporate accessibility into your planning, making sure that accessibility features are incorporated into every document, web site, video and technology solution you create, and making sure that all new technology or equipment purchased meets state accessibility standards.

[Visual of "Brought to you by: The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans and The Office of Enterprise Technology: State of MN"]

Contact us

If you have questions about this change, please contact the OET Service Desk:
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